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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - APRIL 23, 2008

Classified By: PolCouns Rick Holtzapple, Reasons 1.4 (B/D)

11. (U) CROATIA COMPLETES FIRST ROUND OF NATO ACCESSION

NEGOTIATIONS:

MFA State Secretary for Political Affairs Bianca Matkovic led the Croatian delegation in its first round of accession negotiations at NATO HQ on April 21. Matkovic, who also serves as coordinator for Croatia's EU negotiations, called the negotiations a success, saying the GoC expressed its readiness to assume the political and defense obligations stemming from the Washington Treaty. The second and final negotiating round, which will address more technical issues such as Croatia's contribution to the NATO budget, is scheduled for May 7. Following completion of negotiations, the GoC will establish a timetable of final reforms in consultation with the NATO International Staff and submit it with a letter to the NATO Secretary General indicating its commitment to assume the obligations of membership. This will pave the way for the signing of accession protocols by the NAC, tentatively scheduled for July 9. (TSelinger)

12. (C) PM/WRA VISIT ADVANCES MANPADS DESTRUCTION PLAN: Post coordinated visit of PM/WRA Senior Advisor Mark Adams on April 15-16 to key Croatian Army logistics facilities to offer assistance in destruction of the military's excess Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS). During the visit, Adams heard from senior military and MOD officials about Croatia's intent to destroy 929 of the approximately 2,900 Strela-2 (1980's era SA-7 variant) missiles in military stockpiles and 284 of the corresponding gripstocks. Croatia, however, currently lacks a budget for this destruction and for key security upgrades to storage facilities. The visit resulted in a commitment from the MOD to make a formal request within two weeks for USG assistance in accelerating MANPADS destruction. Post intends to use this assistance as an incentive to secure GoC participation in the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Physical Security and Stockpile Management program for Small Arms and Light Weapons. More details septel. (TSelinger)

13. (U) EU ACCESSION: CROATIA OPENS TWO CHAPTERS AND MEETS OPENING BENCHMARKS FOR FOUR:

Croatia has gained significant momentum in April in its EU accession bid. On April 21, the EU opened negotiations with Croatia on two more chapters (Transport Policy and Energy), bringing the number of open chapters to 16. For the Energy Chapter, among other "closing benchmarks", Croatia must set targets to raise the proportion of its energy consumption from renewable sources to 20% by 2020 and must demonstrate adequate administrative capacity to implement and enforce nuclear safety legislation. Earlier in the month, Croatia met its first opening benchmarks for four chapters. The EU approved moving those chapters to the next stage, in which

each side will establish its negotiating position. In a recent public statement, Croatian Foreign Minister Jandrovic said Croatia plans to meet all outstanding opening benchmarks and prepare negotiating positions for remaining chapters by the end of Slovenia's presidency at the end of June. He admitted this is a very ambitious goal, but necessary if Croatia is to complete negotiations by autumn 2009. (SLitke)

14. (U) VICTIMS OF WWII JASENOVAC CONCENTRATION CAMP COMMEMORATED:

GoC officials commemorated the 63rd anniversary of the 1945 breakout of camp inmates with a ceremony on April 20 held at the Jasenovac Memorial Site. Paying tribute to the victims of the Nazi-affiliated Ustasha regime, President Stipe Mesic, Deputy Prime Minister Jandranka Kosor and Parliament Speaker Luka Bebic reiterated that present-day Croatia was founded on values of anti-fascism, democracy, rule of law, and a respect for human rights. President Mesic called on participants to cherish the memory of the victims and preserve the documents and evidence of their suffering. Quoting former U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, Mesic emphasized the need to document everything because without evidence "somewhere down the track of history some bastard will get up and say that this never happened." In December 2007, the Jasenovac Memorial Center published for the first time a book containing a list of the names of 72,193 people killed at the camp. The actual number of Jasenovac victims - mostly Serb, followed by Jews, Roma, and anti-fascist Croatians - still remains disputed to this day. The Jasenovac memorial proves to be a delicate political issue every year, and this year was no different. As in previous years, the absence of high-level representation from the Catholic Church drew critical attention; and in a new twist, Croatia's Jewish

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communities were underrepresented since the commemoration fell on the first day of Passover. (DFisk)

15. (U) PRES. MESIC VISITS ALBANIA; TALKS PLAINLY ABOUT REGION; MEETS MONTENEGRIN COUNTERPART:

Croatian President Stipe Mesic visited Albanian on April 21-22, at the invitation of Albanian President Bamir Topi. The visit was largely focused on strengthening economic and business ties, including calls for better air and maritime transport links. But, in public remarks, Mesic was typically plain-spoken about his view of regional developments. He called on people to "stop being slaves to the past and to historical or pseudohistorical myths." Mesic added, "Kosovo is independent and this reality should be recognized no matter how painful it may be for some. Macedonia and the Macedonian nation are also a reality and no one should expect the Macedonians to renounce their national identity. Solutions should be sought by seeing the reality and reaching the necessary compromises in order to move on." On the second day of the visit, Mesic and Topi held a tri-lateral meeting with Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic.

(RHoltzapple)

Bradtko